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The Great Commission.

NUMBER III.

"Baptizing them."

This short participial phrase has given rise to more religious controversy than any other sentence in the word of God. This controversy is introduced by two questions: Who are to be baptized? and, What is meant by the term baptizing?

The answer to the first question depends upon what term is the antecedent to the personal pronoun "them," in the phrase, "baptizing them." If it refers to nations, as some assume, then the nations,—those who constitute the nations,—should be baptized. But if "them" relates to "disciples" as its antecedent, then *disciples only* should be baptized. Here, then, is an important question for us to settle, if we can; and if we cannot, we might as well admit that the whole question relating to the proper subject for baptism is shrouded in mystery, and we should, at once, become very liberal on this point.

Here is an argument in favor of infant baptism, based on the position, or supposition, that the pronoun "them" refers to "nations."

All nations are to be baptized; but, infants constitute a part of all nations; and, therefore, infants are to be baptized.

This is a fair argument for the baptism of infants; and, if the premises be true, the conclusion must be true, and infants should be baptized.

It is a fact that "infants constitute a part of all nations," and it would be madness to attempt to deny it; therefore, if it be also a fact that all nations are to be baptized, then infants should be baptized. But the argument proves too much, and, hence, proves nothing. Let us try another case.

All nations are to be baptized; but adult unbelievers constitute a part of all nations; and therefore, adult unbelievers are to be baptized.

Now there is no one that believes that adult unbelievers should be baptized. But the argument is just as fair, as clear, and as true in favor of the baptism of unbelieving adults as it is in favor of infants. The same argument would prove that impenitent sinners, which also con-

stitute a part of all nations, should be baptized. If the impenitent and unbelieving should not be baptized, what is at fault in the argument that proves it? Certainly, it is as true that these constitute a part of all nations as it is that infants do. The fact, plain and incontrovertible, is, that Jesus never taught that all nations should be baptized, but only those who believe and are converted. He commanded his disciples to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," "make disciples of all nations," and to baptize those disciples; and, therefore, he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." A disciple, in the sense of this text, is a believer, one who is desirous to learn of and to follow Jesus. With this thought before us, we can revise our arguments and find the truth.

Disciples only are to be baptized; but only converted believers are disciples; and therefore, only converted believers are to be baptized.

This short argument settles or should settle, the question as to the proper subjects of baptism. We may transpose the language of Christ thus: "Go ye, therefore, and of all nations, make disciples, baptizing them," etc. And this accords with the promise of Christ, and with the teaching and practice of the apostles and primitive Christians. Again, Disciples only are to be baptized; unbelieving adults are not disciples; unbelieving infants are not disciples; and therefore, unbelieving adults or unbelieving infants are not to be baptized.

If there is a pedo-baptist in all this world who can show that Jesus Christ commanded the baptism of any besides disciples, let him come forward and show it; but he must do it without putting a false construction on the great commission, or on any other scripture.

Let us next look for the meaning of the term "baptizing." This ought not to be difficult to find; but many think that it is a generic term and has no specific meaning. So far as present usage is concerned this is true. We read in a newspaper or a stranger tells us that "last Sunday, in the city of San Francisco, fifty persons were baptized." Who can tell what was done? They were baptized; but were they immersed, or was water sprinkled or poured on them? We can not know. But if we are told that they were baptized by the Brethren, or by the Baptists, or by the Presbyterians, in either case we would know what was done, because we know what these different denominations do when they baptize. But the question is not what do English people mean by the word "baptizing?" but what did Jesus mean when he gave the great command? Did he mean that they should dip the converts into water? Did he mean that they should sprinkle or pour water on the convert? Or did he mean that they should "Christen" them somehow in the use of water, either by immersion, pouring or sprinkling, according to circumstances or their preferences? It is not my purpose to dwell on the meaning of this word, but I may offer to the challenge of Dr. Cox to Mr. Ewing, author of a Greek Lexicon, in the following words. "I now

once again demand of Mr. Ewing to point me out the Lexicon, which does not give dipping, plunging, or immersing, as the unquestionable, settled, and universally admitted primitive signification of the contested term."—*Bible Explainer*, Art. Baptism.

If we consult Lexicons we find them speaking as follows:

Parkhurst:—"To dip; immerse, plunge in water."

Greenleaf:—"To immerse, submerge, sink; in the New Testament, to wash, perform ablution, to cleanse."

Donagan:—"To immerse repeatedly into a liquid, to submerge, to sink; also, to plunge; also to wash."

Stephanus:—"To dip, immerse, as we immerse things for the purpose of coloring or washing; to merge, submerge, to cover with water—to cleanse, to wash."

Bretschneider:—"Properly often to dip, often to wash;" i. e., to dip often, &c.

Grove:—"To dip, immerse, immerse, plunge; to wash, cleanse, purity; to baptize; to depress, humble, overwhelm."

Liddell and Scott:—"To dip repeatedly, to dip under, to bathe; to wet, to pour upon, to overwhelm."

It will be noticed that all these authorities, and, I might add, all other authorities, agree in giving, as Dr. Cox says, "Dipping, plunging, immersing as the unquestionable, settled, and universally admitted primitive signification of the contested term." If the term has secondary and more remote applications, this fact should not prevent us from understanding its meaning in any given case. We have many words in common use that have different meanings when applied to different things; but they always have the same meaning when applied to the same thing with the same purpose.

Our English word dip has several different meanings; as, to plunge or immerse; to wet, as if by immersing; to plunge into difficulty; to take out; to enter slightly or cursorily; to incline downward, &c. But with all those different meanings, or uses, of the word we never become puzzled or confused, and if we read that the missionary dipped his converts in the waters of India, we know what he did. Exactly so was it with the use of the verb baptizo among the Greeks and those who used the Greek language; and the primary meaning of dip, in English, is no more to plunge or immerse, than was the primary meaning of baptizo. Those who spake the Greek used and understood their verb baptizo just as we do our English verb dip.

If translators had always been governed by this common sense rule, much of the obscurity now connected with Christian baptism would have been avoided. The word chosen must express the primary meaning of the original term, except when the context or some circumstance forbids it, in which event a word must be taken that expresses a secondary meaning in harmony with the context. This rule would have given us dip or immerse instead of the confusing word baptize, about which there is so much controversy. Then we would read, "Immersing them," and, possibly, ministers of the gospel would know what to do with the disciples made by them.

J. W. B.

Circumstantial Evidence.

"A preacher in Fleming Co., Ky., borrowed a suit of clothes to wear while baptizing a convert. Somewhere in the suit there was a deck of cards which the owner of the clothes forgot to take out, and while the minister and his convert were in the water, the cards began to float around them, to the great amazement of the spectators."—*Ex.*

That was rather a humiliating and embarrassing predicament for a Christian minister to be placed in. But it all depends on the reputation he had, as to whether it would be harmful to him or not. The world as a rule is very just in their judgments. When a man has a good reputation, and his walk and conduct in general is square, honest and upright, he will not be condemned when a peculiar and unavoidable circumstance places him in rather an unfavorable light, as in the above clipping. If the conduct of that minister had hitherto been above suspicion, people would accept his explanation without a question. But if, on the other hand, his conduct and walk was open to censure and suspicion, this mishap would have been to his condemnation, and he would have been blamed, no matter how innocent he was. A minister's reputation should place him beyond suspicion when something of this occurs.

A minister is watched very closely, and every suspicious action is criticised. We have no right to complain of this. The minister is a public man, and the public will sit in judgment on his actions, either to justify or condemn. Sometimes circumstances unlooked for and unavoidable place him under suspicion and under such circumstance the man's general character is taken into consideration in forming a judgment. We are every now and then brought in contact with such a case. A minister is accused of indiscretion. There is circumstantial evidence that gave rise to a suspicion, and the man's general character has much to do in making the decision. Although innocent of the particular case in question, he is condemned because of previous misconduct. A man's reputation should be such that it did not require him to have a bundle of excuses in his pocket ready for any emergency. It is rather humiliating to see a minister kept busy running after his character. A good honest upright life will be able to stand a few insignificant bumps. And the public will render a just verdict in case of some unavoidable mishap. Brethren, let us keep from all appearance of evil, walk consistently, and we will have nothing to fear.

M.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Those who "write their first article" will do well to confine themselves to about three pages of paper. It is not best to do too much work before you find out whether it will be satisfactory or not.

It is a philosophical saying that "Responsibility belongs to the side of power and ability." This saying applies to men in various stations in life. The man with great ability as a speaker possesses a capital and his responsibilities are great in the direction of doing what must be accomplished by eloquent speeches. Another man possesses great wealth and his responsibilities are great in carrying forward good works that depend upon the use of money. He is alike responsible with

the other to God for the use of what nature has bestowed upon him. But does nature bestow wealth? No, but it bestows the ability to make wealth. Nature does not bestow eloquence, but it bestows the ability and then the man must improve the capital given him, and then he is in full possession of the power and ability to discharge his responsibilities. Talent is the real power and ability, but talent must be improved to be effectual.

"Deceitfulness of riches," is an expression of the Bible. To many observers the inquiry would arise, in what does the deceitfulness consist? Those who never have possessed wealth suppose that in riches is found perfect happiness, while the experience is quite different. There is unceasing tribulation in taking care of a large estate. There is constant danger of loss, and being involved in some transaction that endangers the possessor's credit. The promise is continually held out that in the possession of more wealth there is perfect happiness and sure security. More, more, more is the tempting invitation, and troubles never cease.

"Contentment with godliness is great gain," says a righteous man; which indeed is true. There is real happiness in that but only trials and perplexities come out of great wealth.

Some one says that "trine" is proper in speaking of our mode of baptism. It may be, and good writers use it, yet there is a shade of difference in the meaning. Trine immersion means a three-fold immersion, while trine immersion means three immersions in one. Custom is the only law that governs the use of language, and "trine" is now generally used in speaking of the God-head. A three-fold immersion accords most perfectly with our practice—three-fold immersion.

CHEAP Bro. J. T. Urice, of Garri-
SERMONS. son, Iowa, ordered 400 of
the cheap tracts. These will pass into
the hands of at least 1,000 persons, and
each tract will preach a sermon to
every reader. This costs the brother
one dollar only.

Hopes for a satisfactory adjustment
of the College difficulty are reviving.

HER Sister Julia A. Wood sets an
LIVING example this week that
should bring a blush to the feelings
of many in reference to their attitude
toward the College. She, as the widow,
who cast a mite into the treasury,
gives of her living, while those who
have abundance, will not help their
brethren who are suffering for the as-
sistance that their representatives have
promised. May God bless the dear sister
who has a heart full of sympathy
for the needy.

Thousand dollar pledges are now the
order for the College. Come on wealthy
brother, you who the Lord has blessed
with financial wisdom and a fortune,
and put your name down for \$1,000.

The *School, Fireside and Farm* is the
title of a new monthly published by the
college authorities at McPherson, Kans.
S. Z. Sharp is editor in chief, and M.
M. Eshelman, business manager. The
subscription price is 50 cents per year.
From it we learn that the college man-
agers have sold about \$5,000 worth of
their Kansas prairie to people about
Lanark, Ill.

Recently an article, giving an ac-
count of the first society of Christian
Endeavor organized in this country,
came under our observation, and from
that we learn the main object was
to make the young converts in the
church workers for Christ. No higher
aim could be made. Too often the
young convert is left without anything
to do to strengthen his zeal for Christ
and his cause, and the religious life is
not satisfactory.

An exchange says: "The Second
Adventists of Battle Creek, Mich., be-
lieve that the end of the world is close
at hand. They are getting their lamps
trimmed. They have discarded their
jewels and like empty gawgaws belong-
ing to the earth, and to prove earnest-
ness, they are making extraordinary
efforts to spread their gospel. At a
recent meeting \$3,000 in cash was
poured into the church treasury, and
about \$2,000 in jewelry turned in. The
latter will be sold to the ungodly, and
the entire proceeds devoted to estab-
lishing missions in Switzerland, Nor-
way, England, South Africa and Aus-
tralia.

Don't say you are in debt and will
not do anything to help the College,
and allow your brethren to be ruined.
Christ came to save you when you were
burdened with sin, and sacrificed all for
your benefit.